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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/996,274	11/28/2001	Michael Miltenberger	TRW(ASG)5986	2372

7590 01/28/2003

TAROLLI, SUNDHEIM, COVELL,
TUMMINO & SZABO L.L.P.
1111 LEADER BLDG.
526 SUPERIOR AVENUE
CLEVELAND, OH 44114-1400

EXAMINER

STEFANON, JUSTIN

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3682

DATE MAILED: 01/28/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

SK

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/996,274	Applicant(s) MILTENBERGER, MICHAEL	
	Examiner Justin Stefanon	Art Unit 3682	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 November 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 28 November 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 3.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1-8, and 11-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent Doc. 09-039801 to Hashimoto.

Hashimoto discloses a method of producing a vehicle steering wheel comprising producing a one-piece steering wheel skeleton 11 having a hub 27, spokes 23 and a rim 13 by casting, gluing a layer made of soft foam 31 directly onto the rim and covering the foam layer with leather 33 glued directly onto the foam, whereby the rim is covered with a covering of foam and leather layers. During the casting process, the rim is provided with recesses 19a over which foam is applied, as seen in Figure 4. The recesses are provided on opposite sides of the rim, with respect to a cross-section of the rim, as seen in Figure 2. Projections 19 are formed on the rim and extend radially with respect to the cross-section of the rim. The steering wheel rim defines an outer geometry of the final covered steering wheel rim. The foam layer and leather covering have a constant thickness, as seen in Figures 3 and 4. The steering wheel skeleton is aluminum or magnesium and pressure die-cast.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Pat. No. 5,925,314 to Nishiguchi et al in view of Hashimoto.

Nishiguchi et al. disclose a method of producing a vehicle steering wheel comprising producing a one-piece steering wheel skeleton B, having a hub 4, spokes 5 and a rim, by casting. During the casting process, the rim is provided with recesses on opposite sides of the rim. Projections 7, 8 are formed on the rim and extend radially with respect to the cross-section of the rim. The projections are bent in a deburring press, so that they cover said recesses. The steering wheel skeleton is a unitary aluminum skeleton pressure die-cast as one piece. The side walls 7,8 on the spokes 5 separate divide the recesses on the rim. However, Nishiguchi does not disclose any means of covering the rim. Hashimoto teaches that it is known to glue a foam layer and leather layer of constant thickness on the outside of a hollow steering wheel rim, thereby covering recesses in the rim and permitting the rim to define an outer geometry of the covered steering wheel rim. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to cover the steering wheel and recesses of Nishiguchi as taught by Hashimoto, since Hashimoto states that such a

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covering would eliminate the need for urethane covering of the rim, thereby reducing weight, cost, and manufacturing time.

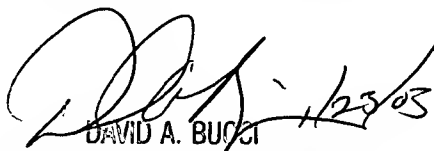
Conclusion

5. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. The prior art includes several varieties of steering wheel with recesses, cast or molded skeletons, leather coverings, and webbing.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Justin Stefanon whose telephone number is 703-305-1945. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Thursday 6 - 4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David A. Bucci can be reached on 703-308-3668. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-872-9326 for regular communications and 703-872-9327 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.


DAVID A. BUCCI
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER SC00

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January 23, 2003